

**ANG****Bayan**

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Editorial

Worsening economic crisis

The ever-worsening economic crisis in the Philippines inflicts heavy blows, especially on the toiling masses.

Recent increases in the prices of basic commodities, which have been successive and unremitting, have hit the people hard.

The amount needed to maintain a decent life increases on a daily basis. Workers' wages, however, remain pegged at extremely low levels and the incomes of peasants and others from the toiling masses are extremely inadequate.

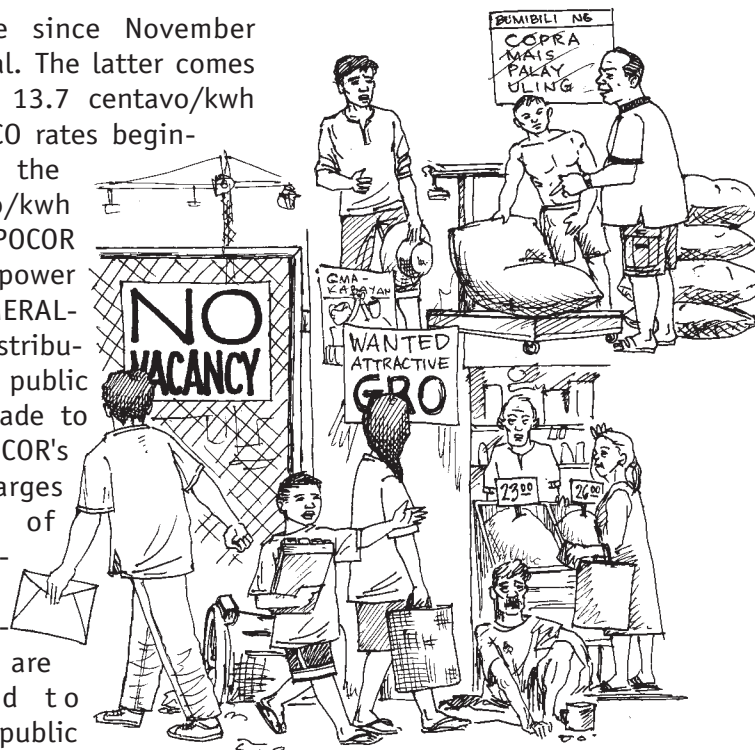
The price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) was hiked anew by P1.70 per kilo on June 17. Since the elections, oil companies have increased gasoline and diesel prices twice. Not content with having hiked the prices of their products seven to eight times this year, they are planning another round of price increases by July.

MERALCO is unrelenting in its attempts to increase electricity charges. This, despite the Supreme Court ruling declaring that the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) had abused its authority and that its approval of MERALCO's 12 centavo per kilowatt-hour provi-

sional increase since November 2003 was illegal. The latter comes on top of the 13.7 centavo/kwh hike in MERALCO rates beginning July and the 14-38 centavo/kwh charged by NAPOCOR for the electric power it supplies to MERALCO and other distributors. It is the public that will be made to shoulder NAPOCOR's additional charges in the form of higher electricity bills.

Water service charges are also poised to increase. Since public utilities were deregulated and privatized, bills for their services have risen by over 500%.

Aside from all this, the regime intends to levy additional taxes to make up for the large budget deficit and to pay for the ever-increasing government debt. Another planned source for filling up the government deficit is the addition of a 50-100% tax on the consumption of soft drinks.



Meanwhile, unemployment continues to rise. According to the government's latest statistics, in April, there were two million added to the previous quarter's seven million who were either unemployed or underemployed. If we compare these figures with those of April 2003, the rate of unemployment and underemployment grew from 27.8% to 32.2%. In fact, these figures are still quite

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understated. The truth is that up to half of the country's labor force has little or no means of livelihood.

Even the reactionary government cannot conceal the abject poverty across the country. Up to 90% of the people or almost 72 million Filipinos live on P137 a day, which is only 55% of the minimum daily wage in Metro Manila and 29.4% of the amount needed by a family of six to live decently.

The present regime is inutile in resolving the people's economic problems and has failed to provide them with any kind of relief. The regime's response to intensifying poverty is further belt-tightening and the extremely insulting advice to the people to grin and bear it.

In truth, the slump in the people's economic conditions is the government's own doing. The government deliberately obstructs wage hikes for private sector workers and salary increases for public sector employees. The slight economic relief achieved by jeepney drivers came after intense struggle and confrontation. The small respite they have gained from fare

hikes has just as quickly been snatched away with increases in the prices of diesel and vehicle spare parts.

On the other hand, in accordance with the policy of neoliberalization, privatization and denationalization, the government grants the imperialists and their local henchmen all the right to plunder the economy.

It allows imperialists to flood the country with surplus goods and destroy the productive forces in local agriculture and industry.

To attract foreign capital, the government allows imperialists complete freedom with respect to the entry and operations of their capital and businesses. Even strategic and public services have been entrusted in the hands of foreign companies and their comprador counterparts. The logical consequence is the unrestrained and excessive increases in the prices of petroleum products and basic goods and services.

This year, the regime allowed hikes in electricity rates and taxes to recover the over P500 billion NAPOCOR debt that it assumed in



accordance with the provisions of the anti-people Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA).

The Philippines' national economy and the economic conditions of ordinary folk are in shambles. The solution lies only in the hands of the people and the revolutionary movement.

In the face of such a situation, it is very important to advance various means of struggle:

There are economic mass struggles in the various places of production—factories, farms and offices, among others. It is important to take these struggles to the streets and to the general public, to assail and oppose government policies that have condemned the economy to further crisis and the people to further bondage, to demand the resolution of immediate economic issues and acquire even partial economic relief.

It is the Party's urgent task to lead and further advance economic struggles; to link and combine them with the outburst of protests against the filthiest and most vio-



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Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. We enjoin readers to send contributions and suggestions for the betterment of our paper.

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lent election in Philippine history; to take advantage of intensifying squabbles among the ranks of reactionaries and the prevailing chaos, paralysis and weakening of reactionary rule as a result of the unresolved question of who won the presidential polls; and to cause convulsions in the entire reactionary system for the benefit of the revolutionary movement.

At the same time, we must continue to implement revolutionary socio-economic programs more vigorously in the New People's Army's bases and areas of operation. Even as we implement agrarian revolution and advance the protracted struggle to fundamentally change the entire system, the people's own efforts to attain immediate relief led by the Party, Red army, revolutionary mass organizations and organs of political power are already a tremendous help.

Likewise, the National Democratic Front peace panel and its consultants will exert all efforts to have the draft Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) contain the greatest possible number of significant socio-economic reforms, both immediate and long-term. CASER, which will be the focus of forthcoming discussions in the peace negotiations on June 22-25, 2004 in Oslo, Norway, is the second point in the peace negotiations' substantive agenda. Like CARHRIHL's role on the issue of human rights, the revolutionary movement and the people may use CASER to advance the people's economic struggles and welfare both within and outside revolutionary bases while total revolutionary victory is yet to be achieved and thoroughgoing change in the country's economic and social system yet to be realized. AB

Instability to mark GMA's rule

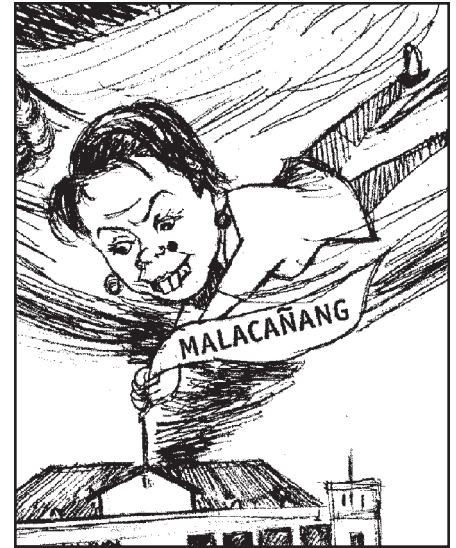
As jockeying grows more frenzied and tensions flare among the principal warring reactionary camps, the reactionary state likewise unleashes more violence and heightens its harassment and intimidation of democratic forces and persons waging legitimate protests, aside from targetting the present regime's main rivals for reactionary rule.

The Arroyo camp engaged in massive fraud and utilized other predatory means just to be able to remain in power. But the billions of pesos worth of funds and government programs it used in its campaign were not enough to ensure Arroyo's victory.

Asserting that the real winner of the presidential polls was Fernando Poe Jr., Arroyo's closest rival, Poe's camp released evidence of election returns that have been tampered with and sought to have these suspicious returns opened and examined. They were repeatedly blocked by the Arroyo camp from doing so. The schemes and squabbles of the opposing camps prolonged the counting.

In a desperate bid to ensure Gloria Arroyo and Noli de Castro's proclamation as president and vice-president, the regime pulled all stops to counter its rivals and the people rising in protest. It brutally suppressed protest actions and railroaded the canvassing and proclamation.

Thousands of armed "anti-riot" police, aside from forces of the AFP National Capital Regional Command were deployed to preempt and disperse rallies and



other forms of people's protest. The mere criticism of Arroyo and protests against the fraud perpetrated by the regime were considered violations of law and sufficient grounds for dispersing rallyists. Malacañang justified its moves, saying that such barefaced repression was being employed against "agents of anarchy and national chaos." This is no different from the term Hitler used against those who opposed the fascist Nazi regime.

To implement its mailed-fist policy, Malacañang's National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, the military, police and intelligence and psy-war personnel busied themselves with cooking up all kinds of destabilization scenarios supposedly being planned and carried out by the New People's Army (NPA) in collusion with the political opposition and disgruntled military officers and personnel.

To make the destabilization scenario look real, the Presidential Guard Battalion, the AFP and the PNP came out with a fabricated plan involving so-called NPA assassination attempts, first against Norberto

Gonzales, former DND Secretary and now NAKTAF chief Angelo Reyes and Comelec Chairman Benjamin Abalos. Of late, Arroyo and Poe were supposed targets as well of an NPA assassination plot. Poe merely laughed off the story and said that it was not the NPA but the Arroyo camp that wants to see his head roll. He said that such scenario-building was only part of the bigger scheme to block moves by his coalition partners, intimidate the people, and suppress protests against massive electoral fraud.

The Arroyo clique's latest maneuver against its rivals was to file criminal cases against Poe and Loren Legarda's lawyers on June 19. To railroad the vote canvass, Arroyo's political rivals were not even given a reasonable period of time to get replacement lawyers. Shortly after the lawyers left, Arroyo's people speeded up the counting so it could wrap up the canvass the following day.

All of this will nonetheless boomerang on the Arroyo regime. Its suppression of legitimate protests and the opposition and its arm-twisting tactics against the congressional minority just to force a new mandate for Arroyo have merely isolated the regime further from the people.

The political situation continues to seethe. More and more are joining protests against the systematic and widespread cheating and violence in the previous election, the railroaded congressional canvass and the suppression of the people's democratic rights. Arroyo's "victory" has been rammed down the people's throats, but it is a fleeting victory and a hollow one at that. Widespread doubts about her electoral victory will not disappear. Her reign will always be marked by disquiet. The groundswell of protest against the regime will not be stemmed until its eventual ouster.

AB

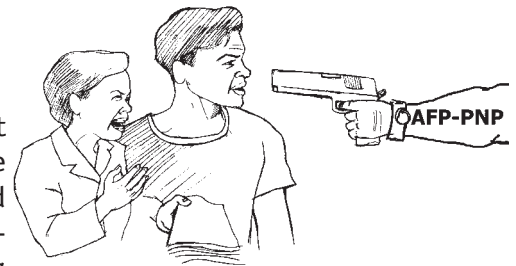
Murder cases filed against the military

The office of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) has been swamped with cases filed against government forces for violating provisions of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). Most prominent were 51 murder cases filed for killings perpetrated by the government's military, police and paramilitary troops.

First case. The very first to file a murder case with the JMC was Dee Batnag-Ayroso whose husband Honorio, a Bayan Muna (BM) member, was abducted by five suspected elements of the 71st IB in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija on February 9, 2002. He was seized together with Johnny Orcino, BM coordinator for Nueva Ecija. The two are missing to date.

Mindoro. Murder cases were filed against Brig. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. for killings committed when he was still commander of the 204th Bde in Mindoro. The cases were filed by Orly Marcellana, Roseann Gumanoy and Edilberto Napoles Sr., relatives of victims killed in Mindoro on Palparan's orders. Orly is the husband of KARAPATAN-ST secretary-general Eden Marcellana while Roseann is the daughter of Southern Tagalog peasant leader Eddie Gumanoy. Marcellana and Gumanoy were abducted and executed by the military in April 2003. Edilberto Napoles Sr. is the father of Edilberto "Choy" Napoles Jr., BM coordinator for Mindoro Oriental who was murdered in March 2002.

Nympha Magsino and



Edilberta Mañano also filed separate murder cases against Col. Fernando Masa, who replaced Palparan as 204th Bde commander. Magsino is the sister-in-law of slain Naujan, Mindoro Oriental vice mayor Juvy Magsino while Mañano is the mother of Anakpawis coordinator for Mindoro Oriental Isaias Mañano. The victims were both slain in the heat of the 2004 electoral campaign.

Up to 36 murder cases in Mindoro Oriental were filed against the military by Girlie Padilla, acting secretary-general of the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace (EMJP). One case involved the murder of Leonardo Rodriguez, a peasant organizer.

Mawab Four and others. KARAPATAN-Southern Mindanao secretary-general Ariel Casilao filed ten cases in behalf of murder victims from the region. One case was filed against Lt. Col. Edgardo Gonzales, commander of the 60th IB of the Philippine Army, who is held responsible for the "Mawab Four Massacre." He has been identified as the brains behind the summary execution of Godofredo Guimbaolibot, Roland Jubajib, Engr. Edwin Asion and Mariano Diamante in Mawab, Compostela Valley. Gonzales is also held responsible for the "Laac Massacre" in Davao del Norte and the forcible evacuation of townspeople in New Bataan,

Compostela Valley.

The following are some of the other cases filed by KARAPATAN-Southern Mindanao:



> Against Maj. Nixon Fortes, in relation to the "Baganga Massacre" in Davao Oriental on August 18, 2003. Among the victims were three minors.

> Against Col. Alen Capuyan, former chief of the Military Intelligence Group (MIG) in relation to the "Maco Four Massacre" in 2003. Four members of Anak ng Bayan—Marjorie Reynoso, Lito Doydoy, Jonathan Benro and Ramon Ragare Jr.—were abducted and summarily killed by the military in Maco, Compostela Valley.

> Against the paramilitary elements who murdered Benjaline Hernandez and three others in April 2002 in Arakan Valley, North Cotabato. Hernandez, former president of the regional chapter of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP), was an official of KARAPATAN-Southern Mindanao when she was murdered.

InPeace (Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao) also filed murder cases against the military in behalf of the bombing victims at the Davao Domestic Airport and Sasa Wharf in 2003.

MEANWHILE, in Quezon, heinous violations of human rights continue without letup, with activists and members of progressive parties and organizations as the main targets. The latest incident occurred on June 18 in Pagbilao, Quezon with the murder of Merle Catabay, a 40-year old Bayan Muna campaigner. Catabay was shot at close range by two suspected military elements in the market of Peninsula Homes Subdivision in Barangay Bukal. According to witnesses, the perpetrators fled aboard a white van without license plates.

This new incidence of violence brings to four the number of Bayan Muna members slain in Pagbilao during the election period. The first three murder victims were Roger Perez, Belen Ysrael and Conrado Katigbak. Perez's wife Cristina escaped death when the couple was shot at near their home a few days before the election.

Four other activists in Pagbilao survived attempts on their lives while two others were abducted and are still missing.

AB

International Day of the Disappeared commemorated

Desaparecidos, KARAPATAN, the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace and the Sons and Daughters of the Disappeared commemorated on June 4 the International Day of the Disappeared. It is a day for remembering those abducted by the fascists both during the Marcos dictatorship and subsequent regimes and have not been surfaced since.

At 759, the number of persons who involuntarily disappeared at the height of the Marcos dictatorship from 1972 to 1981 is already big.

However, cases of involuntary disappearance grew even after the downfall of the dictatorship and the so-called restoration of democracy in the country. During the Aquino regime, the number of desaparecidos came to 821 (based on KARAPATAN reports), with most of them disappearing when the regime was waging its total war against the revolutionary movement.

Thirty-nine persons went missing during the Ramos regime and 26 persons during the time of Estrada.

In Gloria Arroyo's three years of office, KARAPATAN recorded 3,150 human rights violations involving the government's military, police and paramilitary personnel. There were 160 cases of forced evacuation affecting 15,096 families and 112,664 individuals from January 21, 2001 to June 1, 2004.

This period was also marked by the unjust killing by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) of 200 persons in 2003. According to Amnesty International (AI), the killings were in violation of all judicial and legal processes. AI likewise recorded the forced evacuation of 400,000 persons from their communities due to military operations against Moro rebels.

Meanwhile, almost all of the over 300 political prisoners whose release the National Democratic Front (NDF) has demanded as part of the confidence-building measures of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) vis a vis the NDF, remain incarcerated. Only 17 political prisoners have been released since the peace negotiations resumed in the first week of January.

AB

New AFP anomaly exposed

Another case concerning widespread corruption within the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has been exposed. This time, the scandal involves the supply of 97,257 pairs of combat boots for the Philippine Army.

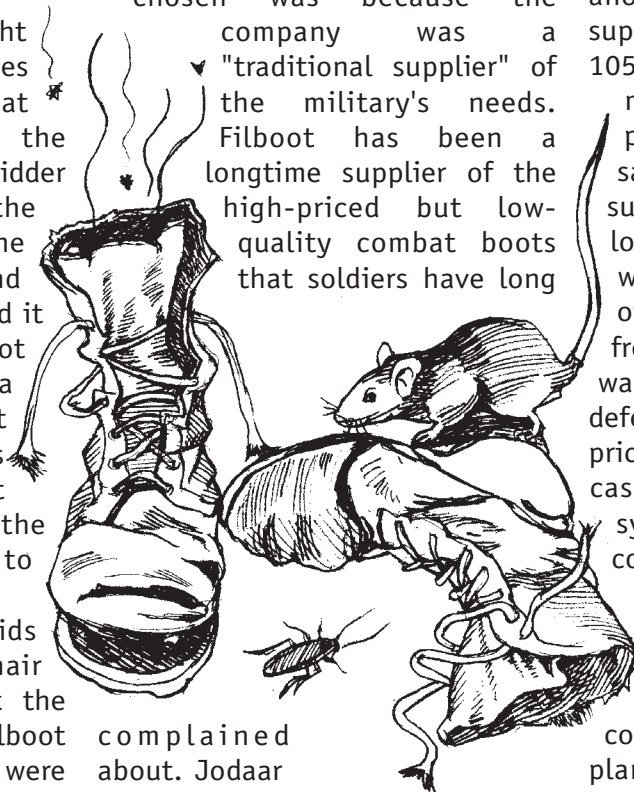
The anomaly came to light when Jodaar Cottage Industries complained on May 31 that instead of being awarded the contract (being the lowest bidder at P993.50 a pair), the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PSDBM) awarded it to the highest bidder Filboot Manufacturing Corp. (P1,047 a pair). The AFP thus spent P101.8 million on the boots while it would have spent P5,203,249.50 less had the contract been awarded to Jodaar.

PSDBM Inter-Agency Bids and Awards Committee chair Eduardo Opida claimed that the contract was awarded to Filboot because its combat boots were more durable than Jodaar's. But Jodaar questioned the testing procedure used on the combat boots since no company representative was present at the time it was conducted. It was also held only after the company with the lowest bid had already been determined.

Irregularities in supply contracts for military equipment were among the complaints of soldiers who launched the Oakwood mutiny in July 2003. Compelled to order new military equipment, Malacañang directed the PSDBM to oversee the bidding process instead of the DND or the AFP so the latter two could avoid finding

themselves in hot water again.

The decisive role of senior AFP officers in awarding contracts for the supply of military equipment was nonetheless confirmed when its chief Gen. Narciso Abaya said that the reason Filboot was chosen was because the company was a "traditional supplier" of the military's needs. Filboot has been a longtime supplier of the high-priced but low-quality combat boots that soldiers have long



complained about. Jodaar pointed out that, in fact, the PSDBM and the AFP Research and Development Center are in cahoots.

It has also been revealed that Filboot is part of a cartel of companies that supply equipment not only to the AFP but also to the police. It now appears that biddings are only for show because even before the companies were awarded contracts, officials in the AFP and PNP high command had already entered into deals and arrangements with this cartel. Corrupt senior officers of the military and police rake in huge amounts of money at the expense of junior officers and the rank and

file.

Nature Care Industries Philippines also bared a similar experience in biddings for the supply of ammunition to the AFP. Nature Care filed two cases against AFP officers in relation to anomalous transactions in supplying P66 million worth of 105-mm artillery shells and P40 million worth of rocket-propelled grenades. Nature Care said that they offered products superior to the others, but at the lowest price, but that their offer was rejected because the senior officers would earn nothing from it. Instead, the contract was awarded to another firm with defective products and a higher price. There are many other similar cases of irregularities in the system of awarding supply contracts for the AFP.

To cover up the irregularities, Malacañang spread the notion that the exposé of Jodaar's complaint could be part of destabilization plans against the government. Carolina Hernandez, Presidential Adviser on the Feliciano Commission Recommendations which conducted a study of the issues surrounding the soldiers' mutiny at Oakwood Hotel, warned that those disclosing the scandal may only be testing the waters to see if the soldiers would respond to it and trigger a new uprising involving the AFP. **AB**

For additional information on the anomalies within the government's mercenary armed forces, refer to the article "Grave corruption in the AFP" in the August 21, 2003 issue of Ang Bayan.

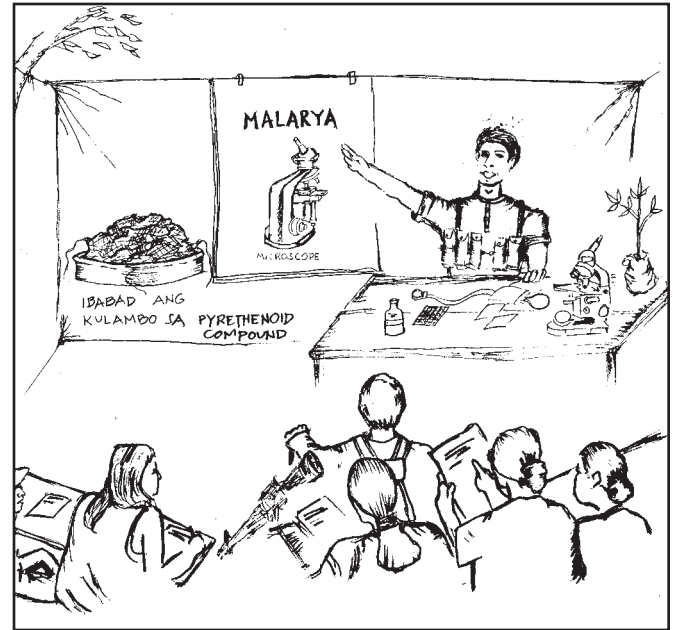
NPA launches anti-malaria campaign

The New People's Army is carrying out an anti-malaria campaign in its areas of operation. It is a medical, educational and political campaign which began in Cagayan Valley as early as 2001 and is now being propagated in various parts of Luzon. It is slated to be launched in Mindanao as well. The campaign is led by N5 or the NPA National Medical Staff.

According to Ka Eloi, head of N5, the campaign will concentrate on areas where malaria is most prevalent, including Isabela in Cagayan Valley, Mindoro and Palawan in Southern Tagalog and various places in Central Luzon.

Malaria is a disease that severely affects the people, is a hindrance to their economic activities, and drains their resources. Many NPA fighters have also been victimized by malaria. In some cases, malaria emerges, is rapidly contracted and spreads among comrades in the same NPA unit or camp. N5 decided to launch an even more vigorous campaign against malaria in the face of the growing number of cases among the ranks of the NPA and the people.

The campaign's aim is to raise the scientific awareness of Red fighters and the people regarding malaria, the political and social reasons why it continues to spread and why the current government has a difficult time eradicating it, and the need for a comprehensive and revolutionary movement to eradicate it completely. One other objective of the campaign is to carry out



steps to combat the epidemic and to reduce the number of persons afflicted by the disease and who die from it.

The campaign features extensive training and studies among the ranks of comrades and the people, identifying the roots and the long-term resolution to the problem. The NPA also provides immediately needed medical services, and mobilizes the people in the effort to control their environment. Part of the campaign involves holding the reactionary government accountable for neglecting to provide the people with health services and other basic needs.

At the initiative of N5, NPA medics at the regional and front levels undergo training in the early detection and immediate treatment of malaria. The training of the principal NPA medics in Central Luzon was successfully launched in March. A similar training is being planned for Southern Tagalog within the year. Members of the first batch of trainees are expected to propagate their knowledge among ordinary fighters and the people.

One of the things emphasized in the trainings is the study of malarial symptoms, which are similar in many ways to those of other diseases such as typhoid fever. Immediate treatment is important in malarial cases to prevent the disease from progressing and leading to fatal complications.

NPA medics are taught microscopy to analyze patients' blood and confirm which parasite has caused a patient's illness. With the help of allies, N5 has been able to provide microscopes to clinics

Malaria

Malaria should be easy to cure. But it remains one of the most widespread diseases in the Philippines. Up to 40,000 people a year are stricken with the disease; 20-25% of those who contract it die.

Malaria is caused by any one of the bacteria *Plasmodium falciparum*, *Plasmodium vivax* or *Plasmodium malariae*. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the types of malaria common in the Philippines is caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*, which is also the most fatal.

Malaria spreads through the bite of the female *Anopheles* mosquito. This mosquito thrives in temperatures of 16-30°C, usually in areas that are humid or receive a lot of rainfall. It usually bites from midnight to dawn. Malaria epidemics spread and persist in areas where there is wholesale destruction of the forest due to excessive logging. With the balance of nature destroyed, the *Anopheles* mosquito resorts to attacking humans. **AB**

run by the NPA. Mobile NPA units have been supplied with and directed to bring with them Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) Kits as a temporary alternative to the microscope. The RDT includes a special piece of paper where a dab of the patient's blood is put. A change in color indicates the presence in the patient's blood of the malarial parasite.

In places where there are incidences or an epidemic of malaria, NPA units provide medical services ranging from checkups to distributing free medicine to malarial victims.

Together with mass organizing and advancing democratic struggles, the people are also mobilized in campaigns to clean and control the environment of their communities. This campaign includes getting rid of stagnant water that may be breeding places for mosquitoes. There is also an active campaign to encourage people to plant neem trees because of their mosquito-repellent effects, and to soak mosquito nets and curtains in pyrethroid compound, a chemical that is fatal to mosquitoes.

At the same time, the campaign strives to continuously deepen the people's understanding of the roots of the widespread problem of malaria and the grave health situation of the Filipino people. It endeavors to inculcate in their consciousness the fact that in the final analysis, the long-term solution to malaria and other diseases depends on the Filipino people's all-out struggle to replace the old and rotten ruling government and social system with a new and revolutionary government and system. **AB**

Government neglect

The current government cannot eradicate malaria because of its extreme neglect of health services. One proof of this is the reactionary government's abolition of the Malaria Control Service five years ago. The agency used to monitor and treat malaria up to the barrio level.

The task of addressing the problem of malaria has been relegated to a desk at the Department of Health. Due to lack of funds, its work is confined to monitoring reported cases of malaria. There is a dearth of medicine for malaria even in health centers in areas where the disease is most widespread. **AB**

NPA victories in Eastern Visayas

The New People's Army (NPA) continues to reap victories in guerrilla warfare in Eastern Visayas (EV).

In a statement, Jose Sumuroy, spokesperson of the Efren Martires Command (EMC) of EV, said that out of extreme desperation, the enemy always conceals or else downplays news on the offensives and victories of the NPA in the armed struggle. The 8th ID merely invents its own victories.

The EMC cited an ambush by the NPA's Orland Colima Command on a platoon of the 52nd IB in Amentacop, Borongan, Eastern Samar on May 5. The 8th ID did not even say a word about it, says the EMC. Two soldiers were killed and another wounded in the firefight. An M14, an M16 and ammunition were also confiscated.

On the other hand, the 8th ID fed a made-up story to the region's mass media boasting that troops of the 20th IB had killed seven Red fighters in an attack on a camp of the NPA Rodante Urtal Command in Palanit, San Isidro, Northern Samar on May 6. The truth is, says Sumuroy, the NPA was already alerted to the enemy's presence early on. Hence, it was able to take an advantageous position and frustrate the enemy attack.

Sumuroy also assailed the commander of the fascist troops for his lack of regard for the lives of his men as he repeatedly ordered them to advance despite the big advantage the Red fighters had and the fact that casualties among the soldiers were mounting. No one was killed or wounded among the guerrillas.

Sumuroy said that the NPA is able to prevail even in defensive battles because of its high fighting spirit and iron discipline, its mastery of the terrain, and the support it enjoys among the peasant masses.

He further said that the people support the NPA because they know that it is their principal instrument for realizing national and social liberation, is highly principled and very disciplined. On the other hand, the people despise the AFP because of its fascist brutality and mercenary character as the reactionary instrument of foreign and local exploiters and oppressors. **AB**



NPA seizes 56 firearms in raids

Red fighters seized 56 firearms in four separate raids on Philippine National Police (PNP) stations in Agusan del Sur, Aurora, Iloilo and Davao del Norte between June 12 and 20. The NPA also carried out an ambush in Quezon and a raid in Compostela Valley in the same period.

In Davao del Norte. The NPA confiscated 24 high-powered rifles and 2,000 rounds of ammunition in a raid on the New Corella police station on the night of June 20. One policeman was killed and another wounded when they exchanged fire with 30 Red fighters aboard three vans. The guerrillas passed themselves off as personnel of the Philippine Army's Task Force Davao.

In Agusan del Sur. The NPA under the leadership of the Northeastern Mindanao Regional Command attacked the municipality of Bayugan on the afternoon of June 19 and confiscated seven M16s and five M14s.

Two policemen were killed while another was wounded in the fighting.

In Iloilo. A 50-strong NPA unit under the Napoleon Tumagtang Command-Southern Front assaulted

the Tubungan municipal hall at around 12:45 in the afternoon. The policemen succumbed to a ruse and thought that the Red fighters who alighted from two passenger jeeps were Philippine Army troops.

It was too late when the policemen realized what was going on. The NPA guerrillas immediately maneuvered to raid the municipal hall. Eight NPA troops quickly entered the premises and told the policemen to lie facedown on the floor. The Red fighters approached and disarmed all of the policemen in the municipal hall, including those who were then training elements of the Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVO).

At the same time, eight other guerrillas entered the police station behind the municipal hall. After a brief firefight, they overpowered the 12 policemen at the station. Meanwhile, an employee who sustained minor injuries when he was hit by glass fragments from a mirror shattered by a grenade blast received first aid treatment from a Red fighter.

Sixteen firearms were confiscated from the police: nine M16s and two M14s, three 9 mm's, a Super .38

pistol and a shotgun. One communications radio was also seized.

It was the first municipal hall raid in Panay since the Second Great Rectification Movement was launched.

Before the attack, the Tubungan Municipal Council had passed a resolution calling for the dismantling of the 3rd ID Reconnaissance Company deployed in the area.

In Aurora. Four firearms were seized and two policemen were killed when a 15-strong NPA unit raided the PNP station in Barangay South Poblacion, Dipaculao on the night of June 12.

The military sent reinforcements but the Red fighters had already retreated and carted away two M16s, a 9 mm, a Super .38 and ammunition.

In Quezon. A Philippine Army soldier was killed and three other troops seriously wounded in an NPA ambush in Barangay Nanadiego, Mulanay on the morning of June 16. The fighting lasted four hours.

In Compostela Valley. An NPA guerrilla platoon attacked a CAFGU detachment in Barangay Libay-Libay, Maco, Compostela Valley on June 17.

Angat police chief meted punishment

Sr. Supt. Tomas de Armas, police chief of Angat, Bulacan, was meted punishment on the morning of June 7 in Sta. Cruz, Angat, Bulacan.

In a statement, the Front Operational Command of the New People's Army (NPA) in Eastern Bulacan said that de Armas was one of the principal enemies of the revolutionary movement in Angat. He was responsible for forming a broad intelligence network in the municipality, and he personally led many military operations against the NPA.

A stark example was the assault

by combined military and police forces on an NPA platoon on March 29, 2003 which resulted in a 14-hour battle. The firefight began in Barangay Pulong Yantok, Angat and ended in Barangay Siling Matanda in the neighboring town of Pandi. Two fighters were martyred, while seven enemy forces, including a PNP chief inspector, were killed.

Shamed, de Armas blew up with explosives and burned down the houses of the masses in the area after the fighting. He ordered the

arrest of Jose "Ka Fidel" Manabat, a local leader, who was tortured for days in a safehouse of the PNP intelligence unit in Angat until he eventually died.

De Armas benefited from the percentage cut he received from an illegal drug syndicate that operates from Barangay Binagbag, Angat all the way to Baliwag town.

He was also one of the biggest protectors of illegal sand quarrying operations in the Angat River, which wreaks great havoc on the people living in the area.

"Bridge Program" withdrawn

STRONG opposition from the League of Filipino Students (LFS)-High School, Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), parents and other sectors compelled the Department of Education (Dep-ED) to withdraw on June 8 the implementation of the "bridge program" scheduled for the opening of classes. The "bridge program" requires some 700,000 students or half of the country's 1.4 million elementary graduates to undergo a yearlong remedial course in English, Science and Mathematics.

The protesters said that the extra year of schooling is an added financial burden on parents. Neither does the "bridge program" resolve the fundamental problem of the rottenness of the educational system due to the reactionary government's erroneous priorities. For instance, the national budget for 2004 allocates 31% for debt service and a mere 12% for education. Consequently, over 90% of elementary graduates are not ready for high school.

Extension of Israeli "security wall" stopped

THE Israeli government was forced on June 16 to temporarily halt the construction of an extended "security wall" within Palestinian territory as a result of protests by the Palestinian people and their supporters.

Since June 6, Palestinians together with activists from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) and supporters from Israel itself, have been holding daily rallies to stop the construction of fences that would go deeper into Palestinian territory inside the West Bank. Israeli soldiers tried daily to break the rallyists' ranks and force the protesters to withdraw, using teargas, bulldozers, guns and even cannons. According to the Palestine Media Center, at least 70 people were injured in the clashes. Israeli soldiers also shot four Palestinian demonstrators, including a 13-year-old child.

Only the construction of the wall's extension has been stopped, however, and Israel remains adamant in setting up the entire "security wall" according to its original plan. This, despite widespread condemnation from the people and various organizations and institutions in Palestine, Arab countries and the world. A large part of the "security wall" takes away from Palestine almost half of its territory in the West Bank and other parts of Palestine, and also slices away many productive farm lands and Palestinian commercial centers. Israel plans to set up Israeli communities in these areas. The residents would include Israelis relocating from the Gaza Strip, also within Palestine.

William Hinton honored

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) paid tribute to William Hinton as a great proletarian internationalist. Hinton passed away on May 15.

Hinton became known for his steadfast participation in the Chinese people's revolutionary struggle and for documenting their victories in building socialism. Based on his years of living among the people in a Chinese village in the 1940s, he wrote *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*. In 1971, he wrote *Shenfan: The Continuing Revolution in a Chinese Village*.

Hinton firmly opposed the restoration of capitalism in China under Deng Xiaoping's regime. In 1990, he wrote *The Great Reversal: The Privatization of China, 1978-1989*, which illustrated how the victories of the great cultural revolution in China were reversed, and how the many victories of socialism were eradicated under Deng's leadership.

Hinton was one of the Filipino people's foreign friends who joined the Anti-APEC Conference and related anti-imperialist mass actions in the Philippines in 1997.